Collective Co-operation in Agriculture

Reg. No. B3092

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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BA AND BAPU

In the evening (26-2-'44) Bapu said to me, "My mind does not think of anything else but Bâ...."

I replied, "Bapu, the passing away of Ba has affected you more deeply than that of Mahadev."

"Yes, it is very likely," he said. "Mahadev passed away suddenly in a moment; but Ba lay suffering for weeks. I cannot forget those days of her torment."

The table whereon Ba used to sit or lie down was brought to Bapu as desired by him. He will now be served his breakfast on it. Said he, "This table has become a very valuable thing for me. The picture of Ba reclining her head on it always stands before my eyes. On the one hand I feel a satisfaction in that Ba breathed her last before me and was carried by me to the burning place, while on the other, I have been stunned with grief at having lost her, my companion for more than 62 years."

Ba was the subject of our conversation during our evening walk also.

Referring to the last moments of Ba, Bapu said, "Ba's calling me thus at her last moment and her passing away while lying on my lap is really a wonderful thing."

At this I replied, "Bapu, this clearly shows that however much Ba seemed to be displeased with you, she had in her heart of hearts great faith in and lasting love for you. I have never come across a single instance in which the wife lay thus on the lap of her husband."

Bapu said, 'It is true no doubt. Even I myself have not found such an example. Such a kind of relation between husband and wife does not exist generally among us."

SUSHILA NAYAR

(Translated from the Hindi *Bapuki Karavas-Kahani*)

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THIS TYRANNY OF LANGUAGE

The following is reproduced as received barring a few mistakes obviously made by the typist:

"I, the undersigned, the resident of J., hereby, most respectfully, beg to draw your kind attention to my application addressed to the Collector, Division H. dated......wherein I have requested the Collector Saheb to grant me No-Objection Certificate together with those of my family as we wanted to go to K. on my daughter's marriage.

"In reply to this, on......I was informed by the said Office that No-Objection Certificate will not be granted to you. So, once more, I applied to the Collector on......and stated therein that I have to go to K. on my daughter's marriage, which under no circumstances, it can, now, be postponed, and so I shall be highly obliged if you grant me No-Objection Certificate; and thereafter I produced two letters, one from.............., and the another one from the most respectable citizen of......Sheth Shree.........certifying my bonafides. Even then on........, I was informed that I won't get the same certificate.

"With reference to this, I beg to state that I had applied for the same on......, but due to the malicious attitude of the local Fozdar, ...on duty at the time I was not opined in a right way and so I was not given the No-Objection Certificate. But soon afterwards, I got my daughter betrothed in ...., and then I had to go, but in order to avoid double journey, I applied not immediately, but after some delay.

"On........, I applied once more, whereby the Collector endorsed and asked for the opinion from Police department regarding myself as well as the members of my family, but the police-department did not change their attitude towards any of us.

"By the way, in connection with this, I may let you know that when Mr........, the.......... minister........came to......, in order to fill in his nomination form as a candidate for...... from.... constituency, I was the man who was specially called for in order to second hand him. This will give your honour an idea as to what type of man I am, and to what extent, I respect the party in power. Moreover, I was one of the four members of the committee of the local........This will let you know my political ideology also.

"Inspite of all the above mentioned facts if I am denied the right to have a No-Objection Certificate and put into difficulties, I shall be led to believe that it means nothing but clear negation of both democracy and negation. No fair minded person will support this sort of treatment accorded to me.

"Still, I beg to request your honour to kindly inquire through any agency, you like, in........or ......, the Secretary of......District Congress, or any Government office, and if you think it fit, I most respectfully request your kind and nobel honour to

grant me No-Objection Certificate and to undo the justice done to me.

"In case, I may be compelled to leave India, before I get No-Objection Certificate and then afterwards if you reconsider my case and come to the conclusion that my return to India is not objectionable — but is beneficial, kindly manage to send my No-Objection Certificate through some of my relatives who are, by chance to stay here. My photographs, if needed, are in the possession of the Collector office,........

"I am a bonafide resident of J......and shall always remain wherever I shall go, I belong to J...... and J......is mine. But as I am not furnished with No-Objection Certificate, I shall be compelled to leave for K. and to the circumstances over which I have no control. Let this be kindly noted.

"Once more, I most humbly, beg your honour to kindly consider my case with a noble and sympathetic mind and allow me to have a free, happy and convenient trip to Pakistan with all my regards and loyalty for India.

"Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours Truly,

.... "

On the merits, I can make no comment, as I cannot verify the statements made therein. My purpose in publishing it is to draw the attention of the rulers to the absolute tyranny unnecessarily caused to the subjects by instituting or continuing the system of presenting applications in a language which the writers cannot understand and much less write correctly. I know how difficult it is to write correct English. A correspondent, a scholar of English grammer, periodically sends me a list of grammatical mistakes which he discovers in *Harijan*, and at one time the list showed more than forty errors in a single issue! I cannot therefore blame such applicants for the faults of their language.

Perhaps, it will be pointed out that almost all Governments have permitted applicants to make representations in their own languages, and it is the fault of the people themselves that they do not take advantage of it. This is partly true. But the reason for this odd behaviour is the opinon that has gone round, based on the experience of applicants that applications in Indian languages, however important, do not receive attention in Government offices; often they are not even read before being consigned to the waste-paper basket. People must be assured on this point, and officers should be instructed to give as much respect to applications in people's own languages as they have been accustomed to do those in English.

Applicants in languages should also understand a few essential points. Applications are often written in very small hand, without leaving any marginal space on any side; the lines are too close to one another, at times as many as 40 or 50 on a half-sheet of foolscap paper. It is too difficult to read them. This is irritating to the eyes of the addressee and his assistants, who have perhaps to deal with scores of such letters everyday. In their own interest, the applicants should write them if possible on type-writer, otherwise in ink, and in bold legible and elegant handwriting, preferably as similar as possible to printed writing. They need not jealously imitate the illegible handwriting of men in responsible offices. They should take compassion on the latter, and not ask them to teach the people by their own example. An application elegantly written commands attention in the same way as an applicant presenting himself in a neat and tidy dress.

In the manner of writing as well as personal interviews, expressions and gestures of too much humility — amounting almost to want of self-respect — are not good. Polite and courteous style is a virtue, not so the 'please your honour' way in which courtiers, favour-seekers and feudal subjects used to address their rulers hitherto. At the same time rudeness and impudence towards public officers, often noticed even among constructive workers, is a definite want of good training. It is a vice.

Wardha, 30-12-'50 K. G. MASHRUWALA

AN HUMBLE SOLDIER PASSES AWAY

Shri N. Dharmapal was a simple-minded village boy of ten when his uncle brought him to be admitted to the Gurukul Ashram at Kengeri (Bangalore) for education and training as a worker. Even as a young boy he had an inquisitive mind and sincerity of purpose. During his five years' stay in the Ashram he absorbed all he could and had glimpses of Bapu once in 1934 and again in 1936, when Bapu blessed the Ashram by his visit.

The constructive programme and ideology of Bapu caught his imagination and ever since he tried his best to be true to the ideal.

After a few months' training in Bangalore we selected for him a village 23 miles from Bangalore and he went and settled there. He won the love and esteem of the villagers, became like a son to the headman of the village, and conducted a school where he broke caste by admitting Harijans to the school. From the school, the Harijan children entered the house of the headman — and since then a silent revolution took place in the village. Later on, when the Mysore State Harijan Sevak Sangh procured some land for starting an institution nearby, he became the spearhead and until the end, which suddenly came on 22-12-'50, when he was hardly 32 years old, he stayed at his post.

Shri Dharmapal was a product of the Ashram, the first and leader of the batch of youths who have emerged out of the Ashram and are humbly working in different spheres.

He worked in various capacities — as the Secretary of a Rural Harijan Hostel, as a Harijan *sevak* in the Mysore State Harijan Sevak Sangh etc. Earlier, he had served a couple of years as a propagandist for prohibition. He leaves behind him a widow and two young children.

Shri Dharmapal's life was one of dedication to the cause of Harijans and villages. We considered him as one of our *Sarvodaya* workers. May his young life, full of selfless activity, be a light to the village workers. May his wife and children find in abundance the affection that is necessary to enable them to carry on their march.

Gurukul Ashram, VISHWANANDA
Kengeri (Bangalore),
26-1-'51

SCRIPT FOR THE SINDHI LANGUAGE

Shri Nanak G. Motwane of Bombay has drawn my attention to the controversy going on in the Press between two sections of Sindhi refugees about the future script of the Sindhi language. One section desires to retain the Arabic script in which the Sindhi language has been written for about a century past. The other wants to re-introduce the Devanagari script, in which it used to be written once, and supports the Bombay Government's policy in that direction.

I think that the step of the Bombay Government is correct and in the interest of the Sindhis. Indeed, the pace proposed by the Government is much slower than needed. The Sindhi language belongs to the same group of languages and dialects as that of Cutchhi and Punjabi, and, I think, may be relegated to one of the Prakrit languages of India, from which all current Indian languages have developed. Its relation to Sanskrit is the same as that of Hindi, Gujarati etc. Since the Sindhis have to settle down in India and in various parts of it, the future generations of the Sindhis will undoubtedly find the Devanagari script as a more convenient medium than the Arabic. Between the two scripts the Devanagari is admittedly more perfect and phonetic and they will find it easier to print their papers and books in it. In a few years' time all the literature in Sindhi can be reprinted in that script. Some of the additional sounds of the Sindhi language can be denoted in Devanagari in the same way as those of Urdu, by placing marks under the normal letters. Devanagari, being the script of the national language of India, will have to be studied any way. Nagari typewriters and telegraphic signals have already come into use, and would be helpful to them.

No doubt several people of the present generation may find the change over to Devanagari somewhat difficult. It may be necessary for them to have at present some books and papers in the Arabic script. The pace which the Bombay Government has adopted is so slow that the present generation will hardly be affected at all. Even thereafter some students might like to learn that script by way of accomplishment or scholarship. This can be done in the same way as Urdu, although the script for general education is Devanagari. Such study might be compared to the study of the Modi script in Maharashtra or the Mundia script in Rajasthan. These two scripts are not taught in schools, but there are always to be found some people who use these scripts. They learn them privately, mostly from parents and friends out of their own fondness. In the same way, the Arabic Sindhi script need not be made a burden upon all, except at a later stage for students of ancient Sindhi manuscripts and publications.

Wardha, 28-1-'51 K. G. MASHRUWALA

UNDER THE GANDHI CAP

The Ahmedabad session of the A. I. C. C. will be remembered by visitors and protagonists of the Congress, among other things, for

(i) the excellent arrangements made for the guests;

(ii) Shri Jawaharlal's Unity Resolution;

(iii) the passing of a new Constitution of the Congress, introducing a primary-membership fee of Re 1/-;

(iv) the ruling of the Congress President that even non-Congressmen can be elected to the Central Election Board;

(v) the passing of a non-official resolution banning the sale and manufacture of *vanaspati*; and

(vi) the change of form of the *khadi* clause.

It is to this last feature that I wish to refer. Article IV mentions the conditions, the fulfilment whereof will make a primary Congressman 'active'. The second condition reads as follows:

> 'He must be a habitual wearer of hand-spun and hand-woven *khadi*.'

Shri Gokulbhai Bhatt of Rajasthan moved an amendment for the restoration of this clause as it stood in the Constitution now repealed. It was as follows:

> "He is a habitual wearer of certified *khadi* — certified through the agencies appointed and approved by the Working Committee — made from hand-spun yarn."

The amendment, when put to vote, was lost. This means that a Congressman will not be bound any longer to put on certified *khadi*. It may be argued that 'hand-spun and hand-woven *khadi*' implies certified *khadi*. But the history behind the old clause shows that no such implication can be presumed. Indeed, if presumption were sufficient, it would not be necessary to mention the words *hand-spun and hand-woven* too. For, under the Khadi Act, no other cloth can be called *khadi*. The conclusion is that the omission is deliberate. Is it to assure Jawaharlalji, who warned that the head wearing the Gandhi cap was of greater importance than the cap, that under the Gandhi-fashion cap, the head will be anything but of the Gandhi mind?

Thus the Congress has spoken its mind. It would have been bolder and more honest to give up the *khadi* clause altogether as Gandhiji advocated years ago, than to promote this hypocricy.

The writer has a great respect for the Congress President, Shri Purushottamdas Tandon. He is straightforward and sincerely wants to purify the Congress. But he must fail, even as individually good officers in the British regime failed to reform that system, and individually good ministers and officers in the services are unable to stop the present corruption and demoralization. A good man in bad company gives the latter a prestige which it has ceased to deserve.

Wardha, 6-2-'51 SURESH RAMABHAI

HARIJAN

Feb. 17 1951

COLLECTIVE CO-OPERATION IN AGRICULTURE

The Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee has circulated for opinion a "draft statement of programme" of land settlement and agriculture. It consists of 15 points. Ten of these deal with the principles of land tenure and the method of farming, the eleventh with the prices of agricultural produce, and the rest with the fixing of the maximum limits of personal income.

The fundamental principle of its land settlement is co-operative farming. It is laid down as follows:

> "Food is the most elementary need of man. The chief means of producing it is land. Land is the gift of nature, and not the product of man's labour. Land should, therefore, belong to the community, and not to a few individuals who may exploit it by their ownership to grow rich by starving the landless. The proprietorship of the farmer will consist of (1) the right to cultivate his land, (2) the right to bequeath this title, and (3) the right to sell this title subject to the conditions laid down by the community in this behalf. Below-basic holdings shall be pooled into co-operative farms and all the functions of a better-farming nature shall be co-operatively performed. Production programmes shall be followed by all. All farms operating in a village should work under the control and supervision of the community as represented by the Village *Panchayat*."

Co-operative farming along with proprietary interest in particular plots of land has been generally advocated by most of our 'progressive' thinkers and planners. The necessity to recognize the proprietary interest or occupancy right in particular pieces of land is regarded as unavoidable in order to provide to the cultivator an incentive to work hard and to improve his land.

Incidentally in an article (*Harijan*, 16th Sept., 1950), not intended for discussing this proposition in particular, I observed:

> "Our present economic and social order, based on individual and separate proprietorship, is very crude. . . . The system, which makes it possible to partition property not capable of being physically divided in a profitable manner, must be ended. In a factory owned by a limited company, a holder of even fifty per cent of shares cannot claim a physical partition of the factory and ask for specific possession of half the factory. He might seek to become its managing director on the strength of his fifty per cent shares, but that would mean possession of the whole factory. In the same way, the land of a village must not be physically partitioned, if it could be tilled together with greater advantage or has a common source of irrigation. Each field must be assessed in accordance with its capacity to produce its staple crop of cereals in a normal year, and it should be assigned a capital value, not in terms of money, but in terms of produce. Assuming that absentee-landlordism has been totally abolished previously, and all the fields in the villages are so assessed, all of them should be regarded as one unit, constituting one single village industry, of which each hitherto owner is a shareholder to the extent of the crop-value of his fields. A small plot should be assigned to each cultivating family, whether it hitherto owned any land or not, for what may be termed "personal hobby-cultivation". This is to satisfy its patriotic sentiments for land, to enable it to make experiments, to grow fruits, vegetables, flowers etc., particularly liked by it, to keep its goats, swine, poultry etc., and for other similar purposes."

I find that I do not stand alone in thinking on the above lines. Apart from the Communists, who are believed to be the protagonists of this system, there are other agricultural reformers also of a similar view. I received a leaflet last week from U. P. in which the same principle was advocated. Prof. P. N. Driver of the Agricultural College, Poona, in his scholarly book *Problems of Zamindari and Land Tenure Reconstruction* ably pleads for the same system. It is therefore worthwhile to explain this idea more fully.

I would advocate the initiation of this kind of agricultural tenure on new lands for settling landless agriculturists, and then extend it to old tenancies.

Suppose a new area of a thousand acres of land is to be colonized by a hundred families. It is estimated that the total area could produce two *lakh khandis* of wheat, if fully cultivated. Its productive value, therefore, is two *lakh khandis* of wheat. This capital may be divided into 20,000 shares of ten *khandis* each.

Set aside in the first place 100 acres of land at the rate of one acre per each family to be given to it for being cultivated and used at will. It may also be used in part by the family for constructing its house. Thus each family will get an equivalent of twenty shares in the form of a plot of one acre each.

The remaining 900 acres of land must be utilized for collective co-operative farming by these hundred families. No particular part of these 900 acres shall be the exclusive property or occupancy of any individual. It is the joint property of the colony, to be managed by its Managing *Panchayat*. The *Panchayat* shall decide which part is to be cultivated, which is to remain fallow, what is to be sown in each field or strip and so on. The members of the 100 families who will work on this land must be given "reasonable" wages. If their labour does not suffice, external labour can be engaged. But such labourers must be given "full" wages such as may be earned in other forms of labour.

(The difference between "reasonable" wages and "full" wages may be explained by taking the example of partners in a firm. Each partner draws a definite sum every month for his maintenance. It is bound to be less than his total share in the firm. But at the end of the year

he will take up the balance. The amount drawn by him every month is no more than a "reasonable" allowance for an earner in his position. But the employees of the firm would have to be paid "full" "living" wages all along. If the full wage of a peasant labourer is one rupee a day the share-holder's reasonable wage may well be about ten or twelve annas.)

The value of the remaining 900 acres of land is, according to the supposition, 900 x 200 = 1,80,000 *khandis* of wheat distributed into 18,000 shares of 10 *khandis* each. These shares may be purchased by these 100 families, provided that no family can purchase more than 400 shares; in other words, none can possess more interest than that in twenty acres of land. The shareholder would have individual proprietary interest not in any particular plot of land, but only in his shares, which he can sell, give away in gift, pledge, will away, and pass to his heirs. All the unpurchased shares should be regarded as held by Government.

It may be recalled that one acre of land has been allotted to each family. This plot may not be divided into more than four parts; i.e., if the owner has four sons each would get a quarter acre. That much portion can also be given away by sale, gift etc. But no family may, by means of purchase or otherwise, own more than two acres of specific land.

With regard to the yield and profits of the joint cultivation of 900 acres, I had made the following suggestions in the article above referred to:

> "The rest of the land must be cultivated as village land. An estimate should be made of the cereals, pulses, vegetables, etc. needed for (a) the full maintenance of the population for at least fifteen months, (b) payment of wages, in addition to food, to enable wage-earners to purchase their own necessities, (c) payment of revenue and other dues to Government, (d) payment of 'procurement levy' if any, (e) payment of interest on debts if any, and (f) expenses of and incidental to cultivation. Whether some of these items are paid in cash or kind, and whether its clothing and other needs are produced locally or purchased from outside, these are charges which have to be met by the village, before there can be any surplus for capitalization, innovations and improvements, or sharing of profits. The sum total of these items is, therefore, the minimum agricultural wealth, which the village must produce in order to live."

I have chosen the name *Samaasraa* (Sanskrit *Samaashraya*) for a colony or society based on this principle: for instance, a society named Pioneer Collective Society would bear in Hindi the name *Aadi Samaashraya* or *Aadi Samaasraa*.

I request the Ministries of Agriculture and Rehabilitation, the members of the Planning Commission, as also others interested in land tenures and co-operation to examine these suggestions.

Wardha, 7-2-'51 K. G. MASHRUWALA

GANDHIJI'S LEGACY AND OUR RESPONSIBILITY

"Ordinary people go by beaten paths, and not by the spiritual one." — says a Sanskrit adage. This is true not only of the common populace but of the intelligentsia as well. To go by the beaten path is to accept current values passively and without inquiry. Out of this is developed a mass mind. The mass mind hardly possesses the capacity to create new values. Hence, the revolutionary has to break loose from the confines of the mass mind and create his own spiritual values. We get a glimpse of Gandhiji's bent of mind for the creation of spiritual values from his very childhood.

His preparedness to eat meat for acquiring physical strength, his revealing the fact of his marriage before his host in England during his student days, his going to the High Court of Bombay on foot as a practising barrister, his effort to bring about a settlement between litigants out of Court during his legal practice in South Africa, his adherence to Hindu *Dharma* in the midst of a Christian society, his religious toleration finally developing into equal respect for all religions, his work for recruiting volunteers for the army in India, his experiment of killing a dying calf, his discovery of Basic education and ultimately his 'do or die' mission for communal unity — all these acts of Gandhiji which he has called his 'Experiments with Truth', owe their origin to his fresh spiritual values.

Gandhiji has left to us the legacy of spiritual values. How far we take advantage of this legacy in establishing the Sarvodaya Samaj of his conception is to be seen. To achieve his ideal, he initiated manifold constructive activities. It is for us to fulfil his incomplete task. It does not seem easy today. The hostile forces are held responsible for it. There is nothing strange in this. What is necessary to consider is how far we ourselves are responsible for non-implementation of the Sarvodaya Programme. Is it not that a sort of mass-mind — a regard for mere form and words — has been created about the slogan of 'constructive activity'? How far can it be said that this activity is carried on on spiritual values? What capacity do we possess to convince the people, who are sceptic about the value of the Sarvodaya Programme? Remember that the number of such people is very great. Are we able to present an all-comprehensive picture of the Sarvodaya Programme? Have we thought out a graded plan of converting the present order into the Sarvodaya order in case we are entrusted with the reins of Government? Have we enough competent persons who can shoulder the responsibility of implementing the Sarvodaya Programme? The sooner the constructive workers realize the importance of seeking accurate answers to problems such as these, the easier will be the work of popularizing and promoting the Programme.

(Translated from Gujarati) JHAVERBHAI PATEL

A SCHEME OF NEW VILLAGE HOUSES

The following description of village houses at Arvatgi (Dharwad District in Karnatak) will apply also to houses in most of the villages of India. They consist of residential houses in opposite rows adjoining each other separated by common walls. A narrow meandering road passes between the two rows. A great many of the houses are in a dilapidated condition. They are series of two or more rooms one behind the other. They have no windows. The ventilation is through the doors in front and behind. The cattle are tied in the front room where they and the human beings live together in the midst of the smell of their urine and dung. There are no bathrooms. Bath is taken in the open. They have no chimneys. The smoke of the kitchen circles round and round the rooms before issuing out of the doors.

We decided to improve these conditions of living under the Sarvodaya Scheme of the Bombay State. We organized a housing co-operative society for the residents belonging to the backward class in the village of Arvatgi with three objects:

1. Providing them with airy and ventilated houses calculated to improve their health and the efficiency of their work;
2. Demonstrating to the residents of the villages round about the advantages of living in good houses; and
3. Giving employment to the villagers who were to own the houses and reside in them. There was a total failure of rains in 1949-50 in these parts and the means of feeding the people had to be found out.

A majority of the members are tanners, flayers of carcasses and Walmikies by caste, but agriculturists by profession. The village had 38 families then. It was decided to construct 18 houses in the first year. The Government granted a loan of Rs 27,000 to the society payable by instalments as the work progressed.

An area of 1½ acres was taken on 99 years' lease. We laid down two streets 30 feet in width and divided the area into plots measuring 50 feet in width alongside the streets and 80 feet in depth. A space of 20 feet x 50 feet on either side of the streets was set apart for a court-yard and flower plants and 30 feet x 50 feet at the back of the houses for the planting of vegetables and for a poultry house. The houses together with the cattle-sheds were to be on a plinth area of 30 feet x 28 feet. Out of this, 640 sq. feet comprising an open verandah, 2 living rooms, a kitchen and a bathroom form the living space. The remaining area of 200 sq. feet forms the cattleshed. It is by the side of the house separated from the living space by means of a wall. Arrangements have been made for the provision of a loft over the living space for storing sundry articles and for a chimney to lead the smoke of the kitchen hearth out of the house. The distance between two houses is 20 feet.

The village is in the midst of a forest. The Forest Department were kind enough to permit them to take gratis materials like wooden poles and some bamboos for the construction of the superstructure. The price of the materials taken under the privilege has been estimated at Rs 102 for each house. The foundation and the plinth are of granite stones which too are obtainable in the forest, in sufficient quantities. The walls 1½ feet in thickness are of unburnt bricks. A suitable clay for the manufacture of these is also obtainable locally. The tiles were manufactured in the adjoining village. Only nails and hinges costing about Rs 30 per house were purchased from outside.

The land on which the houses are constructed was uneven. So some difference in the cost of the construction of the foundation and the plinth was inevitable. But expenses for the other items were exactly equal in the case of all the houses. The villagers themselves attended to the exploitation of the forest for materials and transported them from the forest to the house sites. Considerable quantities of bricks were manufactured by them. They also assisted the masons in the laying of bricks. Professional brick-layers and brick-manufacturers were invited from the neighbouring village to assist these villagers who were to own the houses. While the masons and the brick-manufacturers were paid the full price for the work done by them, the residents of the village were paid only 75 per cent of the wages that would have been paid ordinarily. The balance of 25 per cent was regarded as their contribution towards the expenses of the construction of the houses. The expenses for the plastering of the walls and the manufacture of the flooring were arranged to be looked after by the members.

The expenses for the construction of the houses were as follows; they represent the average of the cost of each house:

		Rs	a	p
1.	The digging of the foundation 1,100 c. ft at Rs 2-8-0 per 100 c. ft. ..	27	8	0
2.	The laying of the foundation and the plinth with granite stones 1,500 c. ft. at Rs 8 per 100 for transport ..	240	0	0
3.	The manufacture of 11,000 bricks at Rs 11 per 1,000. Each brick measuring 1 foot x 9 inches x 4 inches ..	121	0	0
4.	The cost of transporting them from the riverside to the house-site at Rs 9 per 1,000	100	0	0
5.	The laying of the bricks at Rs 30 per 1,000	330	0	0
6.	The construction of room-work (super-structure) and the laying of the tiles	137	0	0
7.	The price of bamboos (extra) ..	65	0	0
8.	Price of 3 door-frames and 3 window-frames	126	0	0
9.	Price of door and window shutters and fixing them to the frames ..	24	0	0
10.	Price of nails and hinges	30	0	0
11.	Charges for fetching water from the river to the house-site	55	0	0
12.	Miscellaneous charges, such as price of ropes, baskets, etc.	10	0	0
13.	Insurance charges, clerical and travelling expenses, stationery etc. ..	50	0	0
	Total Rs	1,645	8	0

If the full wages had been paid to all the workers there would have been an additional expense of Rs 177 and if the forest materials had not been given gratis there would have been a further expense of Rs 102, thus making a total of just below Rs 1,925. The plastering of the houses and the preparing of the floor were left to be done by the members themselves with their own funds at their leisure. The floor has been prepared for all the houses but the work of plastering is not complete.

This scheme provided food and employment to the entire village. Men, women and children were employed over a period of six months. The construction of the houses commenced in January and went on till the end of May. It gave Rs 20,250 to that village and Rs 8,010 to the adjoining village. The members began to reside in the houses in August 1950.

The loan is repayable in 20 annual instalments of Rs 75 each. It carries an interest of 1 per cent p.a.

It brought the desired result. 30 new cultivators, 16 belonging to Aravatgi itself and 14 of three other villages applied for loans of Rs 800 each for the construction of similar houses. They will make their own provision for the loan. In three other villages there will be a wholesale housing programme.

S. K. KALLAPUR

PRESIDENT'S PENSION

A Bill was introduced in the Parliament fixing a pension of Rs 1,500 for the President. The President's term of office is five years and during that period, he receives a pay of Rs 10,000/- a month and the pension is thus 1/8th of the pay.

A poor country like India cannot afford princely salaries or handsome pensions. They become a burden when deflation sets in; they are out of proportion to the average income of an ordinary citizen.

On principle, no pension should be granted to any Government servant, much less to the incumbent of the highest office in the State. It is co-ordinated with capitalist regime and makes the office a source of exploitation, and places the holder beyond the necessity of sweating for his bread. The man who confers the largest benefit on the State — the food producer — gets no pension, no honour, no commendation for his hard toil; he works to the best of his capacity till his demise and, when altogether disabled, depends upon the gratitude of his descendants. The Government servant gets all the good things of life during his tenure of office — his pay, his insurance, high connection, power of patronage, higher education for his children and recommendation for their employment. Sometimes,after retirement, he takes up other paying trades or occupations. None of these chances are available for the common producer.

The producer is the tax-payer and is the employer of all servants. He is the donor of the salaries or pensions and the latter are the donees. He must not be called upon to confer benefits which he can never hope to taste or to shoulder burdens which he can never carry.

A convention must, therefore, grow up that he who is wedded to non-possession of property should be elected as the President of the Republic. He will, therefore, receive only what is actually necessary for his human needs and will not condescend to take more than that minimum. India will then realize the ideal of *Sarvodaya*, and set a noble example for the nations of the whole world.

Vinayashram, 26-11-'50 SITARAM

(*Note*: Alternatively I would suggest, not in the name of *Sarvodaya* or any other ideal, but as a practical course and, not as a convention, but a definite rule, that a retiring President might be provided with a supplementary allowance, if his other means and sources are insufficient to enable him to provide himself with an income, adequate for such a standard of living as the nation considered proper for an ex-President. The amount would vary for each ex-President, and might be varied from time to time, according as such ex-President obtained or ceased to obtain other income. — K. G. M.)

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THAKKAR BAPA'S LIFE

I

A young engineer, in the service of a Kathiawad Railway, was busy laying new railway lines. Many of these were to go across the fields of some cultivators. A number of farmers approached the engineer with fairly large sums of money to induce him to so plan the new lines as not to cut through their fields. The sum offered for this was big enough. But without a moment's hesitation the engineer refused the offer and turned out the visitors. He was no other than Amritlal Viththaldas Thakkar, lovingly called Thakkar Bapa.

Thakkar Bapa was born in Bhavnagar on 28th November, 1869 in a highly respected middle-class family. His father, Shri Viththaldas Thakkar, was an orthodox Vaishnav, who earned his bread sometimes by service and at others by business, but devoted much of his time to the service of his community. He took a keen interest in the social and educational uplift of his community, and was responsible for establishing a Lohana Boarding House to which he gave entirely the last years of his life. He had in all six sons and one daughter, among whom Amritlal was second.

Viththaldas was keen about the education of his sons. He desired that his sons should have college education. Bapa's family is considered to be the foremost among the Lohanas of Kathiawad with higher education.

Amritlal passed his Matriculation in 1886 with good marks in Mathematics and received a State scholarship. He selected the civil engineer's course and joined the Engineering College at Poona. After three years he took the diploma of L. C. E.

Soon after this, he got an appointment as an overseer on the Barsee Railway on a pay of Rs. 75 *per mensem*. After a year he was appointed as an Assistant Engineer on the B. G. J. P. Railway of Kathiawad. The incident narrated at the beginning of the article refers to this period.

Amritlal's standard of integrity did not suit his chief and he found it difficult to pull on with him. Ultimately 'Thakkar Baboo' resigned his post. He was immediately taken up as the Chief Engineer in Wadhwan State. After some two years he was invited by the Porbandar State, which he served till 1899. Here he contracted friendship with the late Dr H. S. Dev who was the Chief Medical Officer there. This friendship resulted later in both of them joining the Servants of India Society.

But during the interval, Shri Thakkar had a variegated career. The Uganda Railway was being constructed in East Africa, and in response to an advertisement for engineers Amritlal applied and received an appointment on a monthly salary of Rs. 300. He was posted at Mombasa. He has recorded in his diaries a

detailed account of how he passed his three years in Africa. He kept himself in touch with events in India, and with current Gujarati literature, especially poetry, and also read and studied Hindu Scriptures.

It was during these years that the severe famine of 1899-1900 occurred in India. Amritlal's father had opened a free kitchen for the poor of his community. He could collect money, but not so easily workers for an organization. Shri Viththaldas personally looked to every item of work. He would stay till the last man in need had had his meals and the kitchen was cleaned. He would come home when it was past mid-day. He would find at the door, a crowd of about fifty to sixty street beggers. People at home were expected to keep ready pieces of *juwar* or *bajra* bread to be distributed among them. He would do this with his own hands. Thereafter he would have his own mid-day meal.

In his fortnightly letters to Amritlal, the father used to send details of his famine-relief work. They proved very inspiring to young Amritlal, and made him yearn for a life dedicated to the service of the people. Among his four *gurus*, as Thakkar Bapa called them, his father's name stood first, the other three being Shri Viththal Ramji Shinde, G. K. Devdhar, and the venerable Shri D. K. Karve.

On the expiry of the term of contract he sailed back to India and after a brief rest got an appointment in the Sangli State of Maharashtra (1903). Dr. Dev was already there as the Chief Medical Officer of the State, so that the two old frineds of Porbandar were together once again. After about a year or so, Amritlal Thakkar got an appointment in the Bombay Municipality. He was posted at Kurla. His job was to inspect the Chembur Light Railway line that carried the refuse of the whole city of Bombay to Kurla side, where the municipal sweepers were to unload it from the waggons and bury it in the pits dug for the purpose. It was here that he came in direct touch with sweepers, and got a first-hand knowledge of the miserable lot of the *bhangis* and the Mahars who had to do this work. He saw their wretched dwellings. Many of them hailed from Gujarat and had paid a pretty good sum to the middle-man as *dasturi* (tip-money) in order to secure a job. They also borrowed money from Pathan money-lenders at exorbitant rates of interest. They started their career as debtors and got no chance to extricate themselves from that condition even after years of service. Undoubtedly, other people before him must have noticed these things, but they took them as a matter of course. But for Shri Thakkar they had a different appeal. He made a resolve to ameliorate the lot of these people. He had only to know the way to do it.

Amritlal had been married, while still a student in the High School, to a young lady named Jivkorebai. She bore him a son who died in his sixth year. There was no other issue. Jivkorebai died of tuberculosis in 1907. Amritlal was married again to Diwalibai in 1908, but she too died in less than two years. He remained a widower thereafter.

It was about this period that the Servants of India Society and the Depressed Classes Mission were organized by the late G. K. Gokhale and Viththal Ramji Shinde respectively. Thakkar Bapa contacted Shinde and studied his work. He became his warm admirer and was deeply touched by the unassuming but wonderful work which his mission was doing to elevate the depressed classes. He had been fighting against the orthodoxy of the Hindu society, under circumstances much harder than those that later workers had to face.

A year's service in Kurla brought to the notice of his superiors Shri Thakkar's capacity and efficiency as an engineer and his sterling honesty, and within a short period he was made the Superintendent of Roads of the Bombay Municipality on a monthly salary of Rs. 360.

While in Bombay, Amritlal rapidly developed close intimacy with Shri Devdhar and other members of the Servants of India Society. He also got closely acquainted with the noble and admirable work that was started by Prof. Karve for widows. As stated before, he regarded Karve and Devdhar as his third and fourth *gurus* respectively. After his duties of the day were over, Thakkar Bapa would often walk up to the Society's Home and discuss with them plans for the uplift of the depressed classes, and for organizing co-operative societies to redeem them from indebtedness. This part-time or spare-time work became a regular feature with him.

But a strong feeling that part-time public work was not enough grew in him and he requested his father to spare him for the service of the down-trodden. But the father replied, 'No, not so long as I live, and I have not many years of life left.' And Bapa obeyed. The father (Viththaldas) died in 1913, and by the end of that year Thakkar Bapa prepared himself completely for the service of the submerged humanity. He made the necessary arrangements for the members of his family and settled the accounts finally. In January 1914, the Municipal Commissioner received the resignation of Shri Thakkar. He tried to dissuade him from taking that step, gave a promise of another big promotion and asked him to finish 15 years of service, which would entitle him to a proportionate pension. But it was now impossible for Shri Thakkar to hold on for a day longer. The call of his conscience, which he had suppressed with difficulty in obedience to his father's wishes, could no longer be disregarded.

G. N.

(to be continued)

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